

Liberia Institute for the Promotion
of Academic Excellence

2014
2021



Desk Review

Collective Actions for
Students Improvement (CASI)

Paynesville, Liberia



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A Policy Advocacy Project under the Supporting Effective Advocacy in Liberia (SEAL) Program

Our Goal

To Increase access and utilization of aligned national curriculum and WASSCE syllabus for 50 senior secondary schools in Montserrado and Grand Gedeh Counties.

Education

For all

List of Abbreviations

1	CASI	The Collective Actions for Students Improvement
2	CEO	Country Education Officer
3	ECE	Early Childhood Education
4	EMIS	Education Management Information System
5	LIPACE	The Liberia Institute for the Promotion of Academic Excellence
6	MOE	Ministry of Education
7	SEAL	Supporting Effective Advocacy in Liberia Program
8	STR	Student Teacher Ratio
9	West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations	WASSCE

Executive Summary



The primary goal is improving the environment for quality learning amongst secondary school students preparing for the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) through policy advocacy for increased access and utilization of an aligned curriculum for senior secondary students.

The Liberian education system has made significant improvements in recent years. However, it continues to experience herculean challenges such as:

- (i) poor infrastructure,
- (ii) limited access to education,
- (iii) overage enrollment,
- (iv) limited funding to the education sector, and
- (v) low learning outcomes

The dismal performances of students on the West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) point to the far-reaching consequences of these challenges and suggest the need for context-driven solutions.

As a visible commitment to mitigating these challenges, the Ministry of Education has made intentional efforts in recent years to contribute to improvement in learning gains. The functionality of a Center of Excellence for Curriculum Development and Research as required by the Education Reform Act of 2011 has placed a premium on the vital role curriculum development and delivery play in improving learning outcomes.

Recent efforts include the development of the National Learning Assessment Framework (NLAf) as a regulatory framework for the development and rigor of school-based assessment and evaluation, content, and procedures within the context of the Liberian education system.

The National Curriculum Policy 2019 (NCP 2019) and National Curriculum Framework 2019 (NCF 2019) further reaffirms the government's commitment to improving student achievement by presenting a competency-based curriculum reform at all levels of education in the country. These policy reforms have resulted in the transition from a content-based curriculum to a competency-based curriculum focusing on ensuring alignment with the WASSCE syllabus.

Sadly, the performance of secondary students sitting the WASSCE exam in the last four years does not posit a parallel trajectory of these strides. Students' performance warrants the need for educational stakeholders to investigate causal factors further and examine the efficiency and efficacy of implementation mechanisms of the revised national competency-based curriculum in schools.

The Liberia Institute for the Promotion of Academic Excellence (LIPACE) designed the Collective Actions for Students Improvement (CASI) project with the primary goal of improving the environment for quality learning amongst secondary school students preparing for the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) through policy advocacy for increased access and utilization of an aligned curriculum for senior secondary students.

Executive Summary

The project aims to adopt an evidence-based framework that amplifies the need to improve efficiency in implementing an aligned national curriculum and the WASSCE syllabus for senior secondary students preparing for the WASSCE exam.

This desk review includes a baseline study with 42 selected sample secondary schools, attempts to analyze the existing efforts and patterns of both curricula, determine helpful insights into the testing pattern of the WASSCE exams concerning topics within the revised national competency-based curriculum.

It further seeks to assess the rate of utilization of the revised national competency-based curriculum in secondary schools. Most importantly, it provides empirical data to decision-makers interested in building shared commonality on advocacy interventions and goals for improving student performance on the exam.

The desk review results show seeming inconsistencies between the utilization of both curricula (revised national competency-based curriculum and the WASSCE syllabus) at the secondary school level. LIPACE recognizes that these inconsistencies could result from the dynamic nature of ongoing reforms to the WASSCE syllabus and not necessarily an omission during the alignment process for the existing competency-based curriculum

Additionally, full access to both curricula is limited to only principals and teachers with limited or no access to students and parents. Lack of access to both curricula

undermines the need for personal accountability for students and further weakens the accountability framework for teachers in delivering key learning outcomes. Teachers are more likely to teach the content they are familiar with, whether in the curriculum or not.

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The baseline study further explores the viability of implementing low-cost, innovative solutions such as curriculum boards for enhancing access to curriculum content while fostering accountability in the delivery of curriculum content. Teachers' and school administrators' perceptions of the use of curriculum boards suggest a favorable consensus for the approach and a robust framework for enhancing teachers' delivery in mending the existing teachers' competency gap.

Empirical evidence gathered from a careful analysis into the testing pattern of the WASSCE exams provides vital insight for schools to understand the frequency of key topics within the curriculum. The testing pattern offers an understanding of the prioritization of curriculum content.

This report affirms that while the need for improvement in educational infrastructural like well-equipped laboratories and libraries with decent and encouraging study environments can bring motivation to students to learn more through practical experience, promoting shared accountability in the implementation and delivery of an aligned curriculum will build confidence and increase student achievement on the WASSCE exams.

This report amplifies calls for the need for an annual technical curriculum convening where all stakeholders (policymakers, CSOs, principals, teachers, students) should commit to improving efficiency and efficacy in delivering the revised national competency-based curriculum. Schools should leverage capacity-building initiatives and novel interventions such as curriculum boards to promote accountability in content delivery. The government should extend sufficient funding and proper financial support to the Ministry of Education and educational institutions to develop the culture of research and innovation and prepare students that are ready to face the world's challenges.



Introduction

Background

Emerging from a destructive period of civil unrest and the Ebola epidemic in 2015, the Liberian education system has suffered considerably. Only 44% of primary-age students currently attend school in Liberia. Of the children who attend school, only 54% complete primary education.

According to the Global Partnership for Education, the largest global fund dedicated to education initiatives, "resourcing at county and district levels requires improvement." Understanding that education is the key to reducing poverty, it is imperative for Liberia's education system to improve.

Despite Government conscious efforts to revive the education sector in Liberia, the statistics are bleak and not very promising. There is a need to address challenges at the policy and implementation level. Financial constraints, poor educational infrastructure, prevailing child labor, a high number of drop-off students, and untrained teachers are some of the issues that policymakers must fix immediately to achieve better results at the educational front.

In 2016, WASSCE declared a massive number of failed students in Liberia as further proof of the gravity of damage to the education sector. Out of 46,927 registered students, 22,671 (48.46%) failed the exam, which reaffirms the weakness of the country's education system and raises serious questions on the quality of education. Academicians pointed out some valid reasons for students' poor performance, including the unpreparedness of schools, lack of instructional material, and need to align the national curriculum with the syllabus of WASSCE.

In response to these grim statistics, the ministry of education embarked on a curriculum review exercise through the center for research for curriculum development and textbooks research. As an outcome in 2018, the Ministry of Education developed with support from USAID a competency-based curriculum with key focus on alignment of the national curriculum to the WASSCE syllabus.



The Collective Actions for Students Improvement (CASI) is a policy advocacy project under the Supporting Effective Advocacy in Liberia Program (SEAL). This project seeks to improve the environment for quality learning amongst secondary school students preparing for the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) through policy advocacy for increased access and utilization of an aligned curriculum for senior secondary students.

The program's objective is to adopt an evidence-based framework amplifying the need for increased access to and full utilization of the revised national competency-based curriculum for senior secondary students preparing for the WASSCE exam for senior secondary students in Montseraddo and Grand Gedeh Counties.

This desk review attempts to analyze the existing efforts and patterns of both curricula, and equally important, identify gaps to address as part of advocacy efforts. The

study mainly focuses on providing empirical data and further seeks to provide an evaluation framework for existing curriculum development efforts by the Ministry of Education.

To do that, LIPACE aims to explore both access and utilization of the aligned competency-based curriculum in Grand Gedeh and Montseraddo County. The study further delves into understanding the testing pattern of the WASSCE exam to gain vital insights that could improve student performances on the exam.

Based on this study, many serious concerns, paramount among these being the need to improve utilization and access to the national revised competency-based curriculum and the need to invest in more novel approaches that are technologically oriented, have been proffered. Added to this is a culture of limited consultation with stakeholders in education whose views and priorities are not discussed and included in the design, implementation, or monitoring of the education curriculum.

Project Overview (CASI)

The Collective Actions for Students Improvement (CASI) project seeks to improve the environment for quality learning amongst secondary school students preparing for the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) through policy advocacy for increased access and utilization of an aligned curriculum for senior secondary students. This intervention is implemented as a policy advocacy project under the Supporting Effective Advocacy in Liberia (SEAL) Program by LIPACE.

Project Partners

Implementing Partners:
Mercy Corps & Kvinna Till Kvinna

The project is implemented primarily on two key objectives:

1. Adopt an evidence-based framework amplifying the need for an alignment between the national curriculum and WASSCE syllabus for senior secondary students preparing for the WASSCE exam
2. Increased access and utilization of aligned national curriculum and WASSCE syllabus for fifty (50) senior secondary students in Montseraddo and Grand Gedeh Counties.

LIPACE commissioned a desk review to understand both curricula' patterns and best practices in Liberia. This desk review exercise seeks to assess and analyze disconnects between two syllabi of MOE and WASSCE while strengthening and generating policy-level insights into improving accountability in the delivery of curriculum contents for improved student performances.

Data collection and baseline analysis garnered from interviews with 42 schools in Montseraddo, and Grand Gedeh county provides the basis for an empirical understanding of the existing efforts and patterns of both curricula, identify gaps, and assess the rate of access and utilization of existing curricula.

The desk review findings align with the objectives of the CASI project and the purpose of the desk review exercise. The desk research examined current practices of syllabus implemented under MOE and WASSCE and how these have affected students' learning and performance in WASSCE exams. It identifies factors affecting students' results in exams and assesses the rate of access and utilization of existing curricula in the context of students' learning outcomes.



Targeted
Groups

Ministry of Education
(CEOs, DEOs, Center for Curriculum Development &
Research), Schools, Educational Stakeholders, CSOs



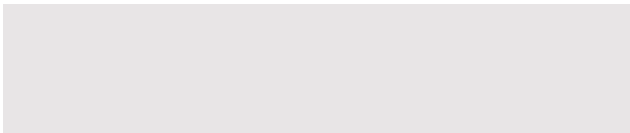
A key challenge in improving the capacity of students with lack of access to the WASSCE syllabus is to achieve usage of an improved curriculum as in the revised national competency-based curriculum in the educational institutions to meet the needs of the students and increase their access to advanced contents of WASSCE syllabus to improve their learning outcomes and ultimate performance in WASSCE exams.

The desk study critically explores issues and factors of low performance of a high number of students in WASSCE exams, identifying the causal factors in the educational sector in the provision of the curriculum. It further explores its relevance in terms of curriculum efficacy in preparing students for exams, the pool of students who drop out of the education system without achieving any good results, and the programs designed to support this group of students to transition to high performance in WASSCE exams in the schools of Liberia.

Overview of WASSCE

The West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) is a type of standardized test in West Africa . It is a more rigorous and standardized exam administered to students and candidates residing in Anglo-phone West African countries. Students who pass the exam receive a certificate confirming their graduation from secondary education. The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) administers the WASSCE exam as an academic school-leaving qualification awarded upon completing the exams.

After registration with the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), all current 12th graders in the Republic of Liberia sit the WASSCE exam. Candidates for the examination are to enter for a minimum of seven subjects and a maximum of nine subjects from the three subject groups as listed in the background above. The Ministry of Education in Liberia has confirmed adding vocational and technical subjects as deemed necessary.



The grading system used on the WASSCE is the stanine with
one (1) - **Excellent**,
two (2) - **Very Good**,
three (3) - **Good**,
four - six (4-6) - **Credit**,
seven - eight (7-8) - **Pass**, and
nine (9) - **Fail**.

At the Subject Awards Meeting, grades boundary per subject for each of the grades are determined, after which the team process the grade/calculation sheets.

The final score has two components: Continuous Assessment Score (CASS) or School's Grade and Terminal Assessment Score (TASS) or WAEC's Grade with the CASS contributing 30% while the TASS contributes the balance 70% of the candidate's final grade. The various schools submit the CASS during the registration process or at a time determined by WAEC. Results for individual schools are immediately accessed online by each school that presented candidates for the examination when the results are officially released.

The grading system used on the WASSCE is the stanine with;

1	2	3
Excellent	Very Good	Good
4-6	7-8	9
Credit	Excellent	Fail

Methodology

LIPACE has commissioned this desk review grounded on empiricism and a thorough review of existing strides by the MOE to contribute to curriculum development in Liberia. Respondents for FGD and stakeholder groups were limited to the CASI project implementation counties; Montseraddo and Grand Gedeh.

The study conducted a total of 42 separate FGD discussions. LIPACE program and MEL team designed the desk review exercise on the foundations of qualitative research and its techniques:

A literature review by analyzing secondary data:

As part of the desk review exercise, the team reviewed several policy documents such as the Education Reform Act, 2011, the National Learning Assessment Framework (NLAF), National Curriculum Policy 2019 (NCP 2019), and National Curriculum Framework 2019 (NCF 2019), Revised National Competency-based Curriculum, and WASSCE syllabus. LIPACE obtained policy documents from the MOE website for validity and credible sourcing.

The team further assessed literature review from several articles through a web search, project briefs, and reports. The LIPACE team employed a kowtow approach complemented by reference checks within articles to ensure credibility in these secondary data. The study used qualitative analysis and its techniques to review and analyze secondary data sources.

Exploring perceptions through stakeholder engagement meetings and focus group discussions:

The team utilized Focus group discussions to assess the divergence of experiences, opinions, perceptions, and attitudes amongst stakeholders such as principals, students, policymakers on access to and utilization of an aligned curriculum. Each FGD session comprised

one school administrator/principal, the vice-principal for instruction, a teacher representative, a parent representative, two students (male and female), and two LIPACE staff. An FGD session lasted for approximately two (2) hours and adopted a participatory engagement framework, and harnessed diverse opinions and cross-cutting views during the discussion. Specific questions were directed to each category to ensure shared opinions, while several questions were open to the group for discussion. FGD respondents were drawn from sample schools in Montseraddo and Grand Gedeh, respectively, with a focus on gender balance, equal representation of teachers, students, and principals

Baseline Research Exercise:

The team collected primary baseline data from 126 respondents (3 per school) across Grand Gedeh and Montseraddo County. Baseline data were collected and analyzed using Survey CTO, while the LIPACE team also used Microsoft Excel to conduct number and percentage distribution. The baseline research provided quantitative indicators that enabled the team to corroborate FGDs and secondary data review findings.

Limitations

The information collected through the project's documents, literature review, reports, and project briefs might be missing details, components or could underreport the specific issues at the crux of this desk review exercise. It is essential to acknowledge that the baseline survey sample size was not determined by power analysis (number of schools sitting the exam). At 95% confidence, CI=5 would have yielded a greater sample size, strengthening inferences and conclusions proffered in this desk review.

LIPACE further recognizes that curriculum development is highly dynamic and is continuously subject to change. Hence, the recommendations proffered therein are not definite and should not be seen as a trend inference for guaranteed success and improved exam performance. The research further identifies the possibility of social desirability bias in students' responses regarding curriculum utilization during focus group discussions which included the presence of teachers and school administrators. Given that many participants in the FGD provided consistent responses during the baseline research conducted individually, we had reasons to believe that participants were to a greater degree forthcoming.

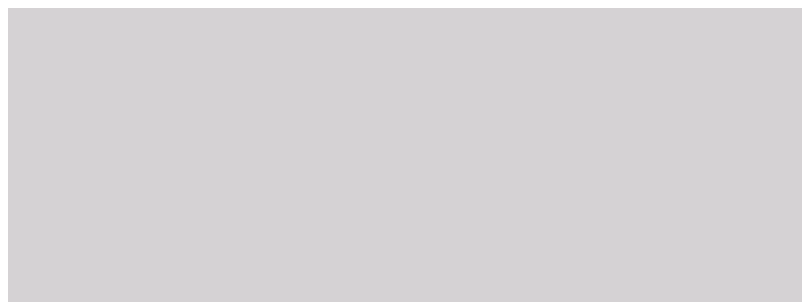
Limitations

i) Desk Review Findings

The findings from the secondary data analyses highlight that the existing revised national competency-based curriculum has made considerable gains in ensuring alignment with the WASSCE syllabus. While the prioritization of topics and placement within the revised curriculum requires consideration to enhance delivery and provide improved performances, this achievement by the MOE is laudable.

Policies and framework documents such as the Education Reform Act (2011), the National Learning Assessment Framework (NLAF), the National Curriculum Policy 2019 (NCP 2019), and the National Curriculum Framework 2019 (NCF 2019) are well-intentioned and with sufficient resources and a commitment to data-driven implementations could drive improvement in learning outcomes and improve student performances on the WASSCE.

LIPACE recognizes that the failures of schools to utilize the curriculum through the use of student-centered approaches and the absence of accountability framework for teachers, especially in rural Liberia, have the propensity to undermine learning gains and long-term outcomes of the existing alignment efforts.



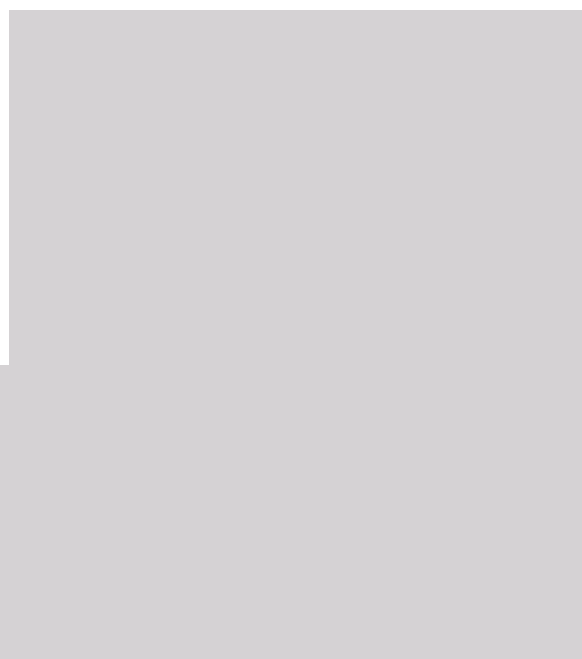
The desk review analysis further revealed the existence of some topics/sub-topics that have been tested on the WASSCE in the last three (3) years but are not within the revised competency-based curriculum. Given that the research did not examine previous versions of the WASSCE syllabus between 2018 – 2020, it was difficult to conclude if these omissions are a result of changes/revision to the WASSCE syllabus after the Ministry of Education developed the existing national competency-based curriculum or whether the omission was during the development process. It suggests the need for an annual technical convening of all curriculum development actors led by the Center of Excellence for Curriculum Development and Textbooks Research. This convening will provide the platform to continuously assess the efficacy of both curricula with a keen focus on featured topics on the annual WASSCE exams.

To understand the testing patterns of the WASSCE exams, the LIPACE team identified the frequency at which these questions appeared on the WASSCE exams in the last three years. The total accumulated marks for these questions of a particular sub-topic / topic further narrow the scope of focus for schools to improve students' performances on the exam. At the same time, LIPACE is not suggesting that these topics represent a trend and a precursor to succeeding on the exam; their frequency and accumulated marks offer an opportunity for school administrators to make improved use of class time and evaluate teachers' competency in the delivery of these core topics. This insight provides a framework for enhancing transparency and accountability in the delivery of curriculum content across secondary schools.

By endeavoring to understand the testing pattern on each subject in the last three years, LIPACE was able to develop a priority rating matrix for each of these topics based on the marks they had accrued on WASSCE papers between 2018 – 2020. These topics are not definite and should note denote a trend considering the changing nature of the curriculum; there is an increased likelihood of them occurring on the exam for as long the current curricula remain unchanged.

Subjects such as History provided meaningful learning into testing sequencing and supported LIPACE prioritization rubrics. The questions type on the WASSCE exam for History are sequentially arranged in a cluster and have consistently covered only six critical topics within the last three years. While this pattern could change given the dynamism of curriculum development, it provides essential learning into the testing pattern on the exam.

The below tables provide a summary overview of topics / sub-topics tested on the WASSCE exams between 2018 - 2020 but seem omitted from the revised national competency-based curriculum. The inclusion of their total accumulated marks during this period provided the basis for the prioritization matrix (High, Medium, Low) as part of overall learning from the desk review exercise.



PHYSICS: COLLECTION OF DIS-ALIGNED TOPICS, ALLOCATED MARKS, AND PRIORITY LEVELS

Dis-aligned Topics / Sub-Topics	Allocated Marks				LIPACE Suggested Priority Level
	2018 (pts)	2019 (pts)	2020 (pts)	Total	
Refraction of Light at Curved Surfaces	2	28	2	32	High
Simple Harmonic Motion (Speed, Acceleration, Period, Frequency, Amplitude, Energy)	4	26	36	66	High
Mathematical Representation of Waves Motion	5	10	12	27	High
Reflection of Light at Curved Surfaces	6	6	6	18	Medium
Resonance in Materials (Force Vibration & Resonance)	2	6	1	9	Low

CHEMISTRY: COLLECTION OF DIS-ALIGNED TOPICS, ALLOCATED MARKS, AND PRIORITY LEVELS

Dis-aligned Topics / Sub-Topics	Allocated Marks				LIPACE Suggested Priority Level
	2018 (pts)	2019 (pts)	2020 (pts)	Total	
Quantitative analysis	20	42	32	94	High
Standard Separation Techniques	6	7	9	22	Medium
Energy and Energy Change	8	10	2	20	Medium
Basic Biochemistry & Synthetic Polymers	4	8	1	13	Medium

MATHEMATICS: COLLECTION OF DIS-ALIGNED TOPICS, ALLOCATED MARKS, AND PRIORITY LEVELS

Dis-aligned Topics / Sub-Topics	Allocated Marks				LIPACE Suggested Priority Level
	2018 (pts)	2019 (pts)	2020 (pts)	Total	
Volume of a Pyramids, Cones, & Cubes	4	6	9	19	Medium
Tangent of a Circle	4	2	5	11	Medium
Finding Intersection of Axes	6	3	2	11	Medium

GEOGRAPHY: COLLECTION OF DIS-ALIGNED TOPICS, ALLOCATED MARKS, AND PRIORITY LEVELS

Dis-aligned Topics / Sub-Topics	Allocated Marks				LIPACE Suggested Priority Level
	2018 (pts)	2019 (pts)	2020 (pts)	Total	
Drawing of Cross Profile	6	9	13	28	High
Mapping & Surveying	56	7	18	81	High
Geographical Representation of Statistical Data-Bar Graph, Line Graph, Dot Maps Proportional Cycles	19	15	4	38	High
Industry, Tourism, Aspect of Regional Geography	64	64	28	156	High

HISTORY: COLLECTION OF DIS-ALIGNED TOPICS, ALLOCATED MARKS, AND PRIORITY LEVELS

Dis-aligned Topics / Sub-Topics	Allocated Marks				LIPACE Suggested Priority Level
	2018 (pts)	2019 (pts)	2020 (pts)	Total	
Trans-Saharan Trade	5	5	5	15	Medium
Islam in West Africa	5	4	5	14	Medium
Christian Missionary Activities in West Africa	5	5	5	15	Medium
The Scramble for and Partition of West Africa	5	6	6	17	Medium
Problems of Independent West African States	4	4	5	13	Medium

LITERATURE: COLLECTION OF DIS-ALIGNED TOPICS, ALLOCATED MARKS, AND PRIORITY LEVELS

Dis-aligned Topics / Sub-Topics	Allocated Marks				LIPACE Suggested Priority Level
	2018 (pts)	2019 (pts)	2020 (pts)	Total	
A Raisin in the sun	4	50	2	56	High
The Pulley	2	25	4	31	High
The School Boy	1	25	2	28	High

ECONOMICS: COLLECTION OF DIS-ALIGNED TOPICS, ALLOCATED MARKS, AND PRIORITY LEVELS

Dis-aligned Topics / Sub-Topics	Allocated Marks				LIPACE Suggested Priority Level
	2018 (pts)	2019 (pts)	2020 (pts)	Total	
Theory of Consumer Behavior	15	30	20	65	High
Labor Market	10	22	12	44	High
Theory of Cost and Revenue	10	23	14	47	High

LANGUAGE ARTS: COLLECTION OF DIS-ALIGNED TOPICS, ALLOCATED MARKS, AND PRIORITY LEVELS

Dis-aligned Topics / Sub-Topics	Allocated Marks				LIPACE Suggested Priority Level
	2018 (pts)	2019 (pts)	2020 (pts)	Total	
Argument	20	50	30	100	High
Oral English	20	50	20	90	High
Sentence Stress	8	10	6	24	Medium
Intonation	6	10	8	24	Medium

The empirical evidence gathered provides an opportunity for policymakers to continuously brainstorm on innovative approaches to respond to any such gap in learning outcomes due to the omission of these topics / sub-topics. These findings strongly suggest the need for an annual convening of technical actors responsible for curriculum development, delivery, and monitoring to assess the rate of topics change and iteratively modify curriculum contents where possible to ensure students have the tools needed to succeed before sitting the exam.

Secondary data sources, which established a strong relationship between the low performance of students and full utilization and delivery of curriculum content, validate the findings of the desk review exercise highlighted in this report.

LIPACE strongly believes the insights learned from the desk review exercise provides the bed-rock from which interventions could be a scale at the macro-level to contribute to education policy on the improvement of students' performance and in designing appropriate curriculum to strengthen the capacity of students, including institutional and teachers' capability that is an essential voice for accountability and equitable resource allocation.

ii) Stakeholders Engagement

LIPACE conducted twenty-eight stakeholder engagement meetings during the exercise with DEOs, CSOs, and policymakers at the MOE. This number accounts for 56% of stakeholders listed for participation in the activity. The low number of stakeholders and policymakers participating in stakeholder engagement meetings was primarily due to work schedules, travel engagements, and unavailability despite a previous commitment to participating in the engagement exercise. The participation of the Center of Curriculum Development and Textbooks Research at the MOE was a milestone and provided an informed positioning for the research exercise.

Generally, all stakeholders recognize the importance of ensuring access to and utilization of the curriculum to improve student performance on the exams. The absence of adequate funding for the roll-out of outreach activities and interventions, such as the printing of physical copies of the revised national competency-based curriculum, especially for schools in rural Liberia, was highly emphasized by policymakers. LIPACE was encouraged to work in close coordination with the Ministry of Education to roll out findings from the exercise instead of using learning from the study to bash out at the government.

iii) Focus Group Discussion

A total of 42 FGD sessions (One per school) were conducted during the exercise to assess the divergence of experiences, opinions, perceptions, and attitudes amongst stakeholders such as principals, students, and policymakers on access to and utilization of an aligned curriculum. A total of 336 persons (254 males and 82 females) participated in these discussions.

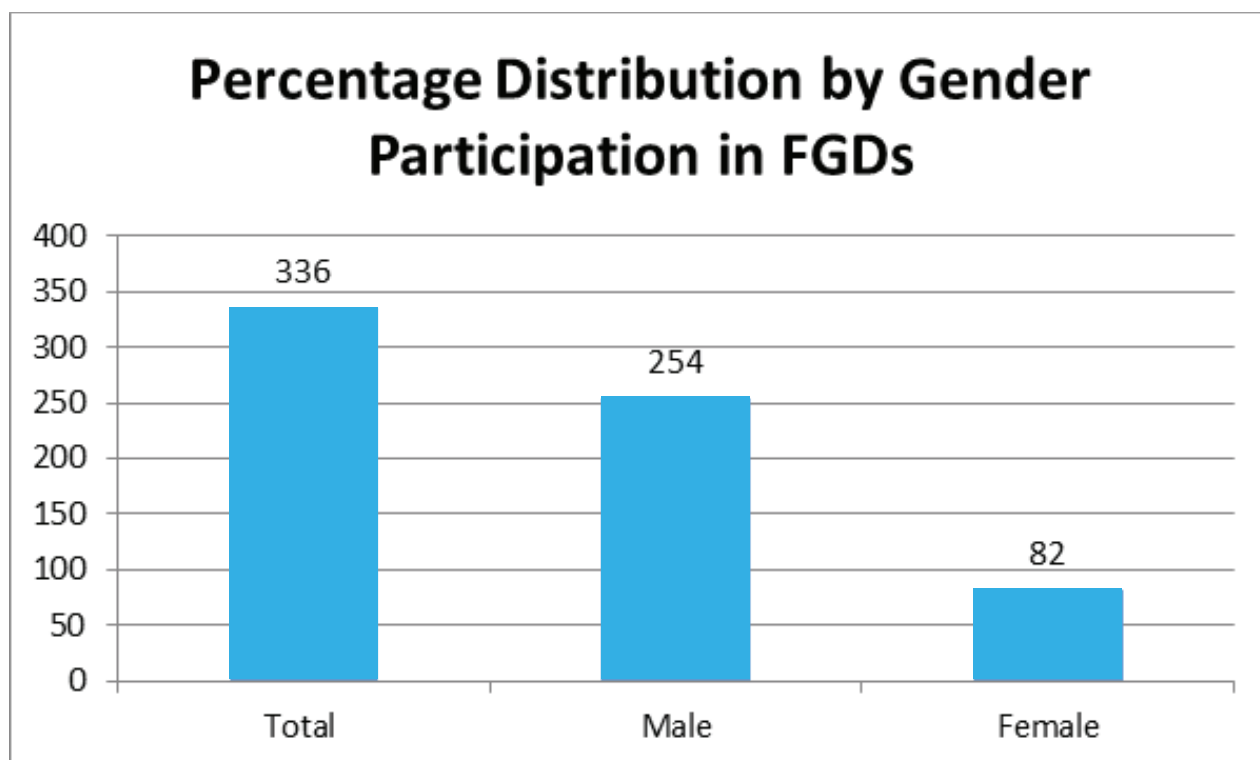


Figure 1. Percentage Distribution by Gender Participation in FGDs

The seeming gender imbalance affirms the need for more females in school leadership roles. LIPACE team ensured that student participation included one male and one female across all schools.

The below theme guided each FGD discussion:

- What are participants' thoughts on the CASI Project goals, objectives, and outcomes? Are the project goals and objectives necessary to their institution?
- Are the project's objectives achievable and include the participation of all FGD participants?
- What is the participant's understanding of the phrase "access to and utilization of an aligned curriculum" for students?
- Are both curricula accessible and utilized by all teachers for improved performances of students in the exam?
- What is the participant's view on using curriculum boards to improve and strengthen accountability in the delivery of curriculum content?
- Would the institution welcome the use of curriculum boards in senior secondary classes to promote personal accountability and strengthen accountability in the delivery of curriculum content?

The LIPACE team adopted a participatory engagement framework approach to ensure that all participated in the FGDs. Responses were then synthesized and coded for analytical purposes.

A review of these sessions revealed that all 42 schools viewed the project as necessary to their institution and highlighted the issue of students' performance in the WASSCE exams as very important to their institution's reputation. Despite this recognition, several participants, especially parents and students, struggled to identify their specific roles and contribute to attaining the project goals and outcomes.

While the FGD did not investigate the educational qualifications of participating parents, the LIPACE team could see that literacy levels affected participation and articulation of roles under the project. Students participating in the survey struggled to express themselves freely and provide responses linked to project goals and outcomes. Many of these students became active participants in the discussion as the conversation unfolded.

School administrators generally had a proper appreciation of what it meant to have access to and fully utilize the curriculum and largely dominated the conversations with this question. There was a general awareness of the revised national competency-based curriculum by the MOE, but many schools indicated the unavailability of physical copies of the curriculum for individual teachers.

Participants revealed that access to the curriculum was through the Principal or Vice Principal for Instruction Office. It was worth noting that few sample schools indicated that teachers received electronic copies of the curriculum from the VPI via their mobile phones. There was a consensus that access to physical copies of the

revised national competency-based curriculum will help teachers improve the utilization and delivery of curriculum content. If anything, the general responses of participants suggest the need for improving access to and full utilization of the revised national competency-based curriculum by all teachers for improved performances of students in the WASSCE exam.

There was a good acceptance of the use of curriculum boards as a novel approach to improving and strengthening accountability in the delivery of curriculum content.

The Vice-Principal from the Gbagba High School was overwhelmed with joy and exclaimed! "It is a 99% good idea, and I even want it to start now".

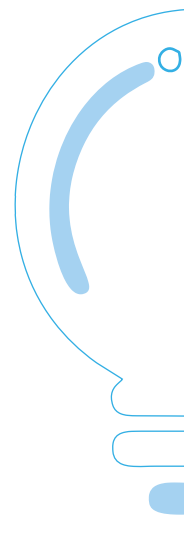
Another school administrator from the Zwedru United Methodist High School responded, "I like the innovation, and our teachers will welcome this idea."

Despite the positive appraisal, some teachers expressed apprehension on the house of the curriculum boards.

One teacher shared his fears by saying, "Some teachers will accept, and others will not accept it."

Students will see it as an opportunity to disrespect teachers in the classroom." said a teacher who prefers anonymity.

Overall, participants were excited to know about the completion of curriculum boards before sitting the WASSCE exam. Generally, all of the 42 schools that participated in the FGD sessions indicated that they would welcome curriculum boards in senior secondary classes to promote personal accountability and strengthen accountability in the delivery of curriculum content.



iv) Baseline Survey

CASI conducted a baseline survey with 126 respondents from across 42 schools located in Grand Gedeh and Montseraddo to corroborate findings from FGDs and secondary data review. Three survey participants were selected from across the project 42 schools and included 42 students, 42 teachers, and 42 school administrators.

Details of Participants in Baseline Survey

Category	Number
Schools	42
Teachers	42
School Administrators	42
Students	42
Total No. of participants	126

The LIPACE team selected a different group of students, teachers, and school administrators that had not participated in the FGD meeting for the baseline survey.

The team conducted a structured interview with all 42 schools to collect information and gain vital insights into school leaders' perception on access to and utilization of the revised national competency-based curriculum for senior secondary students. A total of 85% of teachers interviewed indicated that they were aware of the revised national curriculum, but only 40% stated that they had copies of the curriculum for their respective subjects. Teachers gained access to the revised national competency-based curriculum via the Principal or the VPI office. This data corroborates findings from the FGD meeting session conducted across the 42 project schools.

The survey further revealed confusion amongst teachers' interviews on the type of curriculum used to teach their classes. Only ten (10) teachers interviewed indicated that they were integrating core contents from both curricula (WASSCE Syllabus & Revised National Competency-based curriculum) into their course work. Notably, 90% (9) of these teachers' respondents were from Montseraddo, while only 10% (1) of these teachers using both curricula were from Grand Gedeh.

This validated findings from the FGD, which indicated that many teachers in Montseraddo County received direct copies of both curricula from their VPIs through electronic sharing on their mobile phones. It is important to note that all of the teachers interviewed in Montseraddo and Grand Gedeh indicated being monitored by the Vice Principal of Instruction at their school to ensure they teach all the prescribed topics from the curriculum.



A vital component was to ascertain respondents' views on curriculum boards as an innovative approach in promoting accountability in delivering curriculum content. The curriculum board ensures that students and teachers know the curriculum content students should complete before sitting the WASSCE exam.

A total of seven (7) teachers representing 16.67% of teachers surveyed either disagreed or strongly disagreed on the use of curriculum boards as a viable intervention for improving full utilization and delivery of the curriculum content. This data is in sharp contrast to 100% of both students and school administrators interviewed who strongly agreed that the use of curriculum boards is a viable intervention for improving full utilization and delivery of the curriculum content. While this might suggest the risk of potential apathy from few teachers, the overwhelming endorsement of the use of curriculum boards by school administrators could mitigate any such disregard and provide a realistic pathway for piloting the intervention with selected schools.

Conclusion

Education is the backbone of sustainable development for any country in the world. Therefore, Liberia has to work on the education policies and implementation strategy. This study has shown that a high degree of political will by the government, Ministry of Education, and school management is needed to implement existing policies and curriculum development framework.

There is a need to improve funding access to the Center for Curriculum Development and Textbooks Research to roll out context-driven interventions to improve access to and fully utilize the revised national competency-based curriculum.

Stakeholders and policymakers recognize the vital role of curriculum development, access, and utilization in strengthening accountability and transparency in delivering and utilizing the revised national competency-based curriculum at the schools level.

The study recognizes the MOE's considerable strides in ensuring alignment between the WASSCE syllabus and the national curriculum. However, there is a need for a continuous conversation on the exam pattern and moderation to identify omitted topics from



the revised national competency-based curriculum due to the changing dynamics of the WASSCE syllabus.

The use of curriculum boards in classes represents a novel and cost-effective approach in ensuring access and utilization of the revised national competency-based curriculum, especially for students, while promoting accountability in delivering curriculum content for teachers. Students will have access to curriculum topics/-sub-topics with an increased likelihood of appearing on the WASSCE exams.



Recommendations

LIPACE proffered the below recommendations to ensure full access and utilization of the revised national competency-based curriculum, thereby improving student performance.

- There is a need for an annual curriculum review convening sessions amongst stakeholders to routinely assess topics occurring on the WASSCE exams in correlation to their alignment with the revised national competency-based curriculum. Said convening shall include representations from the Ministry of Education, academicians, teachers, civil society experts, experts, including the exam governing body – WAEC. It will positively affect students' performance, and market competitive human capital can bring lasting change into the Liberian education system.
- Teachers are the most important pillars of the education sector and architects of fully utilizing the revised national competency-based curriculum. The Government of Liberia needs to invest in teachers by building their capacities to understand the curriculum contents and ensure best practice pedagogy and student-centered approaches across all secondary high schools in Liberia.
- Enhancing teachers' accountability is an essential recipe for ensuring full utilization of the revised national competency-based curriculum. Cost-effective approaches and mechanisms such as curriculum boards for senior secondary students are vital opportunities in improving access to and full utilization of the revised national competency-based curriculum, especially for rural schools.
- Schools or CSOs working to improve student achievement should conduct routine topics analysis as a pathway for understanding the WASSCE exam moderation to better use class-time and enable students to understand topics on the WASSCE exam.
- There is a need to increase budgetary allocation for the education sector. Policymakers should develop a proper road map to utilize that given budget productively with emphasis on programmatic interventions geared at ensuring full access and utilization of the revised national competency-based curriculum and the functionality of the Center of Excellence for Curriculum Development and Textbooks Research at the MOE.

Curriculum Board